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To: ad hoc Public Works Planning Committee

Date: February 5, 2010
Version: 2.4.10

Subject: Draft interim Public Works policies

The ad hoc Public Works Planning Committee drafted the following policies on January 30 and February 2, 2010. The policies are being recommended to the Board of Selectmen to address concerns expressed by Town Meeting with the proposal to form a Department of Public Works. Listening to input from all boards, committees, commissions and affected departments, identified the concerns. The policies are arranged to clarify presentations to Town Meeting and adhere to the established Vision Statement order of priorities. The Vision Statement is:

Westford prides itself in its ability to provide superior community services to its residents. In order to continue public services far into the future in an ever-changing fiscal environment, Westford recognizes the requirement to improve efficiencies and economies.

Westford will provide the highest quality and responsive, municipal level of service in the most cost efficient and effective manner taking advantage of economies of scale across its infrastructure through proper utilization of assets, procurement, maintenance, application of new technologies and personnel.

The priority order is (1) proper utilization of assets, (2) procurement, (3) maintenance, (4) application of new technologies and (5) personnel. The technique used to develop policy is detailed in the Public Works Planning Committee Policy Development Guide, dated January 21, 2010. In summary, a problem was described using the feedback summary report titled Board, Committee, Commission and Department Feedback Summary, dated January 20, 2010. Stating why the problem needs to be resolved,

along with corrective actions to be taken and by whom completed the exercise.

Under each policy heading, the ad hoc Public Works Planning committee's thoughts are captured. The statement, in bold type, is the policy draft.

Policy 1. Service Level and Value

Problem: Escalating costs to make it difficult to maintain desired service level

Why it is a problem: tax revenue doesn't support or match the increases as fast as they are rising, mandatory or regulatory requirements place an added burden on delivery of services, too much of the budget has become non-discretionary, long term services are short changed to deliver short term services with capital projects being underfunded, short term flexibility is limited, service enhancements and new initiatives are limited

Corrective Action: (1) identify services provided and target audience and (2) quantify the service level, (3) separate internal versus external services, (4) identify the stakeholders

Who: Department Heads with Town Manager's office oversight

In order to maintain a desired public works level of service, escalating cost factors must be effectively managed to meet expectations of residents, assure compliance with all applicable laws, direct discretionary funding to where it is needed most and allow for new initiatives or service enhancements. The Departments with oversight from the Town Manager's office will track and evaluate the value of internal and external service level on a continuous basis.

Policy 2. Comparisons

Subject: Town Meeting requested town versus town comparisons

Problem: Too much credibility is put into market basket comparisons

Why is it a problem: market basket comparisons do not accurately reflect public works services levels between communities

Corrective Action: proposed changes in Westford will be evaluated on the value provided

Who: Town Manager and Department Heads

Statistical analyses between towns do not accurately reflect service levels and too much credibility is placed on market basket town comparisons by

Town Meeting, therefore changes proposed by Town Management will be evaluated on a basis of value provided for any service level within Westford.

Policy 1. Utilization of Assets

Problem: Bureaucratic rules will slow things down and work will not get done

Or Getting resources to the problem in the best interest of the Town

Or Getting resources to a job while adding minimal bureaucratic overhead

Why it is a problem: underserved departments don't see the problem and may accept bureaucracy just to get work done

Served departments see the problem because they will lose the informal system of getting services

All departments are not served equally

Corrective/Action: establish a centralized system, with authority to assign and schedule resources, and establishing cross charges between departments for resources used

Who: Town Manager with approval of the Board of Selectmen

Getting Town resources to a job will be facilitated without adding significant bureaucratic overhead to insure that all department needs are equally served by establishing a centralized system including cross charges, with the authority to assign and schedule staff and equipment by the Town Manager.

Policy 2. Utilization of Assets

Subject: Volunteer board, committees and commissions

Problem: new role in the organization not defined

Why it is a problem: rate setting responsibility, contributions of experience, responsibility for level of service, expertise in standards of performance for level of service, expertise in MGL or federal law

loss of control, public relations loss, political loss

Corrective Action: committees will not be abolished, merged, or created (following language in the Town Charter)

Who has oversight: Board of Selectmen

Volunteer boards, committees and commissions contribute a wealth of experience from institutional knowledge, performance standards and expertise in Massachusetts General Law and federal law without whose input the Town may suffer a loss in service level, public relations and control. The Board of Selectmen will see that volunteer contributions are valued by limiting reorganization, consolidation, abolishment, creation, merger or division of boards, committees or commissions during the transitional period.

Policy 3. Utilization of Assets

Subject: Conflict resolution

Problem: setting service priorities (in house)

Why is it a problem: department favoritism, leads to higher costs, different use and special needs for school and municipal facilities or vehicles, land, leads to public safety issues

Corrective Action: define system of setting service priorities

Who: Department Heads w/ approval of Town Manager and School Superintendent

Dedicated department resources assure a responsive allocation of in-house service, but may lead to favoritism, higher cost and loss of general public safety. Prior to the consolidation of any function, service or department, the Department Heads, with the approval of the Town Manager and School Superintendent, will establish a system of service priorities.

Or

The fear of favoritism has led to providing dedicated department resources to assure a responsive allocation of in-house services, but at a higher cost and risk of declining public safety. Prior to the consolidation of any function, service or department, the Department Heads, with the approval of the Town Manager and School Superintendent, will establish a system of service priorities.

Policy 4. Maintenance

Problem: Lack of capital maintenance standards

Why is it a problem: Lack of consistency in decision-making and prioritization

Inability to determine true cost

Insufficient resources to meet regulatory and public safety level of service

Replacement cycle prediction (projection)

Corrective/Action: establish appropriate standards, including maintenance cycles, replacement or useful life cycles, expected maintenance schedule

Who: Capital Planning Committee and Department Heads under the Town Manager's office and oversight

A lack of capital maintenance standards leads to inconsistency in scheduling, cost and staffing determinations and long term budgeting. The Capital Planning Committee and Department Heads with oversight by the Town

Manager's office will establish appropriate standards, including but not limited to maintenance, replacement, and useful life cycles of Town assets.

Policy 5. Maintenance

Subject: Volunteer board, committees and commissions

Problem: Boards do not have sufficient resources to provide services (physical or financial)

Why is it a problem: creates inequities between boards, priorities not addressed, leads to loss in public safety, deferred maintenance leads to increasing capital costs

Corrective Action: develop standards of performance for all Town assets

Who has oversight: Town Manager

Without physical and financial resources, volunteer boards, committees and commissions are limited in their ability to maintain service levels leading to inequities across boards, increasing capital costs and a decline in general public safety. Minimum performance standards for all Town assets will be developed by the Town Manager's office.

Policy 6. Personnel

Subject: Volunteer and staff morale

Problem: Process was not transparent

Why it was a problem: Morale and trust issues arose from potential organizational changes, rumors persisted, feeling that deals were being made

Corrective Action: Make the process as transparent as possible through frequent and open communications, follow up reports to Town Meeting, establishing points of contact for staff and residents, provide a list of resources

Who: Board of Selectmen

The Board of Selectmen will promote an open and transparent process for proposed organizational changes through active participation and frequent communication, to prevent a loss in trust from volunteers and staff.